

Local group urges Sanders to visit Gaza

By BOB AUDETTE
Brattleboro Reformer

BRATTLEBORO—A group of local activists is urging Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., to visit the Gaza Strip and observe the conditions on the ground. On Friday, from 5 to 8 p.m., at Pliny Park, Brattleboro Solidarity will host a rally "in solidarity with Palestinians demonstrating nonviolently for their rights."

"Our main objective is to pressure Bernie Sanders to visit Gaza and see for himself the unjust conditions of the people trying to survive," said Anna Mullany on behalf of Brattleboro Solidarity. "With Bernie, the media will follow, bearing witness to the occupation and resistance of Palestinians. We hope you will join in condemning the atrocious acts of violence perpetrated on non-violent protesters and demand justice in Palestine."

In addition to hosting the rally, Brattleboro Solidarity is urging people to write letters to Sanders and call his office.

"Gaza is unlivable," said Mullany. "Palestinians are risking their lives. It is important that we act."

In response to a request for comment, Sen. Sanders, in an email to the Reformer, wrote

"I share the concerns of many Vermonters regarding Gaza. The situation there is a humanitarian disaster and must be addressed immediately. Youth unemployment is

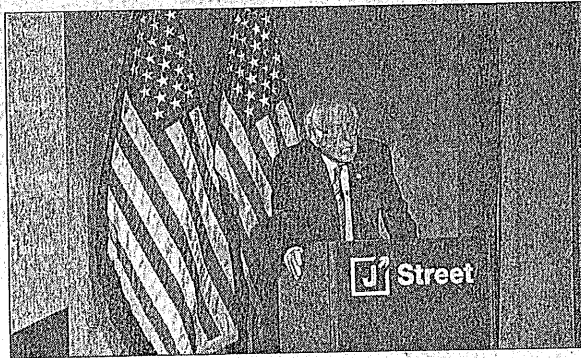


PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE OF SEN. BERNIE SANDERS

Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks during the annual conference of the pro-peace Jewish group J Street on April 16.

60 percent, the water there is deeply polluted and the infrastructure is collapsing. The United States must help end the Gaza blockade, demand that Israel accept a two-state solution and help Palestinians and Israelis build a future that works for all."

Brattleboro Solidarity has set up a petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org/p/bernie-sanders-send-a-message-to-bernie-bernietogaza) urging Sanders to travel to Gaza, at <https://www.change.org/p/bernie-sanders-send-a-message-to-bernie-bernietogaza>. It has also drafted a sample script for people who want to write a letter to Sanders or call his office, and posted that sample script on the group's Facebook page.

During the annual conference of the pro-peace Jewish group J Street in Washington, D.C., on Monday, April 16, Sanders criticized "the reactionary policies" of Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and "the inhumane blockade of Gaza."

Sanders did not restrict his criticism to Netanyahu and Israel, however. He also specifically mentioned Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and other leaders in the region who have failed to engage in finding a solution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

"So I say to the crown prince and the other multi-billionaire leaders in the region, stop just talking about the poverty and distress in Gaza, do something meaningful about it," Sanders said. "I heard the other day that the Saudi king pledged \$50 million to UNRWA, the UN agency that works with Palestinian refugees. Fifty million dollars is not a small sum of money, but let us not forget

that it is ten percent of what the crown prince paid for a yacht."

Sanders also noted that justifying violence based on "The presence of Hamas members among a crowd of tens of thousands" is disingenuous.

"I have condemned Hamas' use of terrorist violence and will continue to do so. But that violence cannot excuse shooting at unarmed protesters, and it cannot excuse trapping almost 2 million people inside Gaza."

According to Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper, Sanders went on to discuss the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict and expressed concern over the future of the two-state solution. According to Sanders, putting an end to the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian state "is in the interest of Americans, Israelis, Palestinians and the entire region."

But, Sanders said, "Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies seem to be preparing for a different future, in which Israel controls the entire territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River in perpetuity."

Sanders also had leveled criticism at the Trump administration and its decision to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, saying that with the move, "President Trump has severely undermined the peace process."

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House passes bill to import prescription drugs from Canada

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — The Vermont House has passed a bill that would allow the state to import cheaper prescription drugs from Canada.

The bill had strong support Wednesday, passing in a vote of 141-2, Vermont Public Radio reported.

The bill will create a state entity that acts like a wholesaler and buys the drugs in Canada and then sells them in Vermont pharmacies, said Democratic Rep. Bill Lippert.

The measure was driven by the skyrocketing costs of prescription medications, he said.

"It's just impossible to access them unless you have really adequate health insurance, and sometimes even having adequate health insurance is not sufficient," he said.

Before the plan can be implemented, a waiver from the federal government is needed, which Lippert is hopeful will happen next year, given that the Trump administration has shown a strong interest in reducing prescription drug costs. The deal is expected to save residents millions.

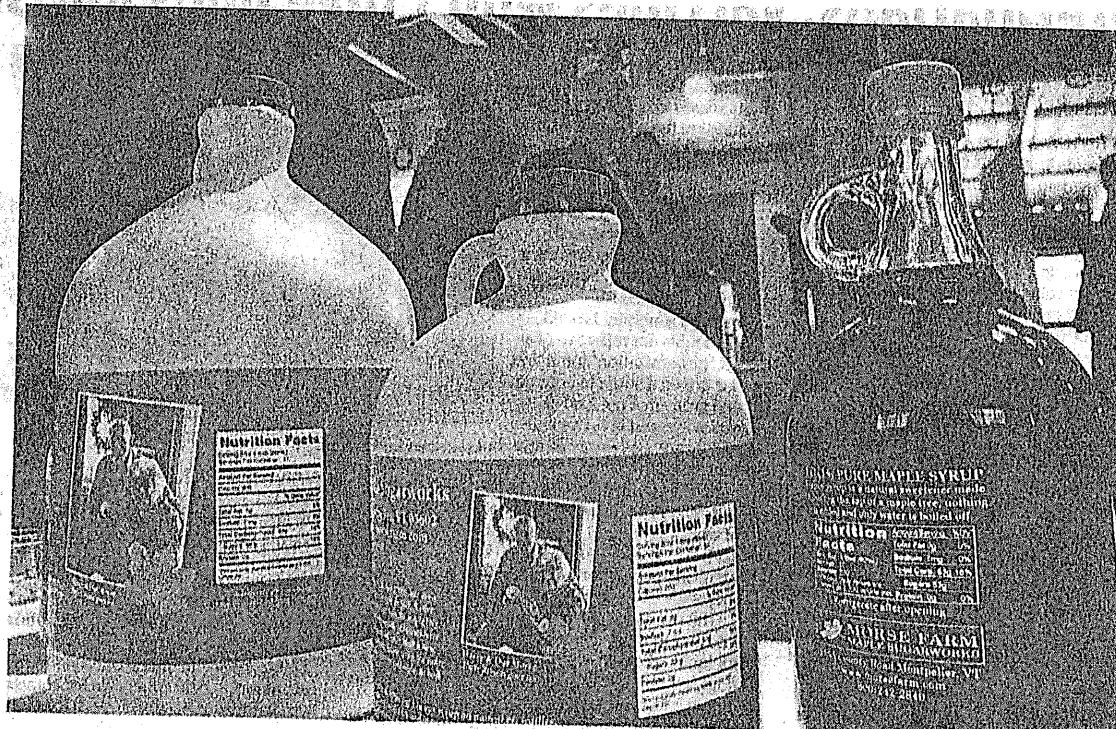
"The proposal is to be able to import safe, reliable, cheaper prescription drugs," said Lippert.

While opponents say Canadian drugs aren't safe, Democratic Sen. Claire Ayer has called that claim "baloney" because a large number of Canadian prescription drugs are made in the U.S.

The concept of importing prescription drugs in order to save money is not new. Vermont's then-U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders took busloads of people to Canada in 1999, where doctors wrote them prescriptions for drugs that cost a fraction of what they would have paid for them in the U.S. Sanders, now an independent U.S. senator, introduced another proposal last year to allow for the drug importation from Canada.

Federal law was changed in 2003 to allow the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to authorize the importation of prescription drugs, but such permission has never been granted.

The Vermont bill will return to the Senate, where lawmakers will consider either passing the House version or making changes.



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Containers of maple syrup, with nutrition facts on their labels are lined up on a table at Morse Farm Sugarworks in East Montpelier, Vt., Tuesday, May 1, 2018. Maple syrup and honey producers aren't too sweet on a plan to label their natural products as containing added sugars. The FDA plans to require updated nutrition labels for products that would say that pure maple syrup and honey contain added sugars. LISA RATHKE, AP Photo

MAPLE, HONEY PRODUCERS NOT SWEET ON ADDED SUGARS LABEL

By LISA RATHKE
Associated Press

EAST MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Producers of pure maple syrup and honey aren't sweet on a plan to label their pure natural products as containing added sugars.

They say the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's upcoming requirement to update nutrition labels to tell consumers that pure maple syrup and honey contain added sugars is misleading, illogical and confusing and could hurt their industries.

"There are no added sugars. Maple is a pure product," said U.S. Rep. Peter Welch of Vermont, the country's leading maple producing state.

Others from Vermont's congressional delegation joined Welch at a press conference Tuesday. Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy and a representative from Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders' office were also there with some maple producers to discuss their plan to fight the FDA requirement.

Welch said that many consumers don't want added sugars, which makes them think of corn syrup or other un-natural elements.

"They want pure products," the Democrat said, "nothing more so than

maple syrup."

Tom Morse, of Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks in Montpelier, notes that maple syrup comes right from trees and producers refine it to keep the quality high.

"It's 67 percent maple sugar and that's what it is, nothing more, nothing less," he said.

To address industry concerns, the FDA has suggested that producers could use a symbol after the added sugars daily value directing consumers to elsewhere on the label where they could say these sugars occur naturally.

FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said he has made nutrition one of his top priorities, and the Nutrition Facts label hasn't been meaningfully updated in decades.

"We've made it our goal to increase consumer awareness of the quantity of added sugars in food products consistent with recent dietary guideline recommendations," he said in a statement released in March. "The new label also contains

the new daily value for added sugars, so consumers can better understand how foods with added sugars can fit into a healthy dietary pattern."

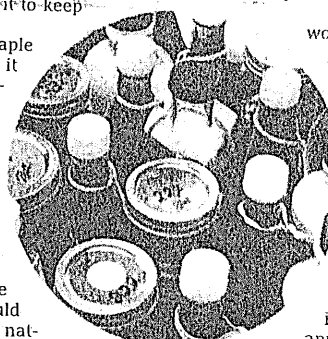
Large manufacturers would have to comply by Jan. 1, 2020, and smaller manufacturers by Jan. 1, 2021, according to the FDA's proposal.

The label with the symbol is still confusing, producers say.

"It's clear that when applied broadly this is an example of well-intentioned federal regulation that is totally illogical when applied in this context," said Roger Brown of Slopestyle Maple in Richmond.

The American Honey Producers Association says it could lead to consumers wondering what's being added to pure honey, when nothing is. Both industries say they work hard to protect their pure products from adulteration.

"Honey is a pure sugar so there's no need for added sugars," said Chris Hiatt, the association's vice president. "So it's misleading the consumer."



BEYOND BERNIE

PBS series examines state's political identity

Retrospective chronicles Vermont's unique culture and politics

COLCHESTER — Vermont may be a small state, but when it comes to the national political and cultural spotlight, it's grown accustomed to the glare. A phenomenon perhaps best characterized by **Senator Bernie Sanders'** 2016 presidential run, Vermont's outsized contributions to the national political scene are as fascinating as they are remarkable, and they are all chronicled in "Beyond Bernie: Searching for Vermont's Political Identity," a five-part web series produced by Vermont PBS that launches on May 9.

"Beyond Bernie" is a story of the character, in-

dependence and unique community experience of this special state — it's so much more than a story of Vermont. Politics," Holly Groschner, president of Vermont PBS, said in a release. "Senator Sanders has been a touchstone for this phenomenon. There are also cultural, political and historical forces driving the Vermont ethos explored in this series."

Rare archival footage contributes to the exploration of pivotal events in Vermont history and the people behind them. From the political mobilization that grew out of the "back-to-the-land-

ers" movement to Senator Sanders' presidential candidacy, each of the five segments explores a different aspect of Vermont's political legacy.

- "It's the Person, Not the Party" looks at how Vermont bucks the national trend of voting along party lines, including discussion of current Governor Phil Scott;

- "The Next Gen" considers how millennials, inspired by Senator Sanders, are getting involved in politics;

- "The Eyes of the Nation on Vermont" goes back to Sen. Jim Jeffords' historic defection from the Republi-

can Party during the George W. Bush administration;

- "Burlington's Socialist Mayor" revisits the conservative '80s, when Burlington surprised the nation by voting for Bernie Sanders as its mayor;

- "They Ended Up Changing the World" examines a time when Vermont, a historically conservative state, experienced an influx of hippies and "back-to-the-landers," starting the tradition of progressive politics in the state.

All five episodes will be available on Wednesday, May 9 online. Viewers can watch the series on Face-

BEYOND BERNIE

Searching for Vermont's Political Identity

PROVIDED BY VERMONT PBS

book or at vermontpbs.org/beyondbernie. A one-hour compilation of the series

will also air on Vermont PBS at 8 p.m. on Thursday, May 17.

Geoffrey Norman *CR 5/5 A4*

They Never Learn... Giving Socialism Another Try

Bernie Sanders does not shy from the word "socialist." In fact, he embraces it. And he is on record as saying that it works. A few years back, he wrote the following:

These days, the American dream is more apt to be realized in South America, in places such as Ecuador, Venezuela and Argentina, where incomes are actually more equal today than they are in the land of Horatio Alger. Who's the banana republic now?

Of the nations he listed, Venezuela was the show pony for Sanders and celebrity socialists like actor Sean Penn. After strongman Hugo Chavez died, Penn wrote that, "Venezuela and its revolution will endure under the proven leadership of vice president Nicolas Maduro."

So, to use the wise-guy formulation of the day, "How did that work out for you?"

The answer is, predictably, "Actually, not so good."

The latest economic news from Venezuela is that, the

... inflation rate, already by far the world's highest, spiked from 4,966 percent to nearly 18,000 percent in just March and April — a trend that, if it continues, could push the country's annual rate to more than 100,000 percent by year's end, economists say.

Those who can leave the country are doing so. Those who re-

main behind are, literally, starving. According to one survey,

"...72.7% of respondents said they lost weight in the past year, dropping an average of 19 pounds ... average weight loss was slightly higher among those living in extreme poverty."

And yet, the dream still lives. On May Day, you could read, in the New York Times, an essay arguing that Karl Marx actually got it right.

I remember once, years ago, arguing these things with a friend who was much smarter and better educated than I. He believed that socialism was the answer. That it would make the distribution of wealth and goods equal and fair. That the skills to run a command economy were within the range of human abilities.

"What about eggs?" I said.

"Beg your pardon?"

"Eggs. You know, like what you had for breakfast."

"What about them?"

"Well, the eggs came from the grocery store and you knew when you went in, you could pick up a dozen. The grocery store always has eggs."

"And your point is?"

"Well," I went on, "I stopped at a place on my way to work, took a seat at the counter, and ordered two, over easy, side of bacon."



"Okay."

"All over town, people were cooking and eating eggs and you know what? It wasn't because some Ministry of Eggs was hard at work. If there were such a thing as Ministry of Eggs, you and I would have been eating oatmeal for breakfast."

"Hmmm," he said.

"I mean, would you trust the people who run the Post Office to make sure you can have fresh eggs for breakfast, every morning?"

The great Marxist experiment, the Soviet Union, failed at just about everything except killing its own citizens and making nuclear bombs. The Russian people got it and they rendered the overweening futility of their lives into bitter jokes like the one about the man who goes into a store to buy something to eat and can't find what he is looking for. "You mean you have no meat," he says to the man running the store.

Who answers, "No. Here we have no fish. Across the street is the store that has no meat."

One wonders if they are telling jokes in Venezuela.

Meanwhile, in the United States, unemployment has dropped to just under four percent. This is the lowest it has been in almost twenty years. Wages are rising, though slowly. But con-

fidence in the economy is on the rebound.

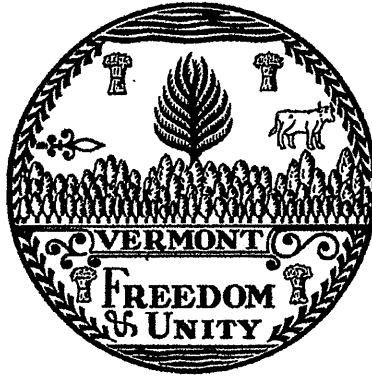
And if you merely look around you can see evidence of remarkable prosperity and innovation. You can order toothpaste from Amazon and confidently expect next day delivery. Self driving vehicles will soon be commonplace. If health care is expensive, its accomplishments are astounding. Cancer is not yet universally curable. But many cancers are.

The list goes on and on. And yet ... there is still this discontent. This longing for socialism. This belief that some nation will somehow get it right. And that, sooner or later, we will try it here.

Bernie Sanders is, arguably, the most galvanizing figure in the Democratic Party. Hillary Clinton says his message ate into her support enough to cost her the election. Polls indicate that millennials favor socialism over capitalism by 43 percent vs. 32 percent.

Well, it must be nice to be young and idealistic and unaware of history and of what is happening, today, in Venezuela.

Geoffrey Norman is a former editor of Esquire magazine and is a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal, Weekly Standard and National Review. He has authored more than 15 books and remains active shaping public policy discussions.



Articles of Interest

V BFP 5/5, 124

VT Guard deploying to Southwest Asia

Jess Aloe
Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

An air ambulance unit of the Vermont National Guard will deploy in June to Southwest Asia on a mission that could involve combat zones, the Guard announced Friday morning.

The deployment includes about 60 members of the Army National Guard's Charlie Company. Deployments typically last about a year, the Guard said.

Charlie Company, which will deploy with six Vermont National Guard Black Hawk helicopters, will perform medical evacuations and will support Missouri National Guard's 35th Combat Aviation Brigade as part of Operation Spartan Shield.

Troops that are a part of Spartan

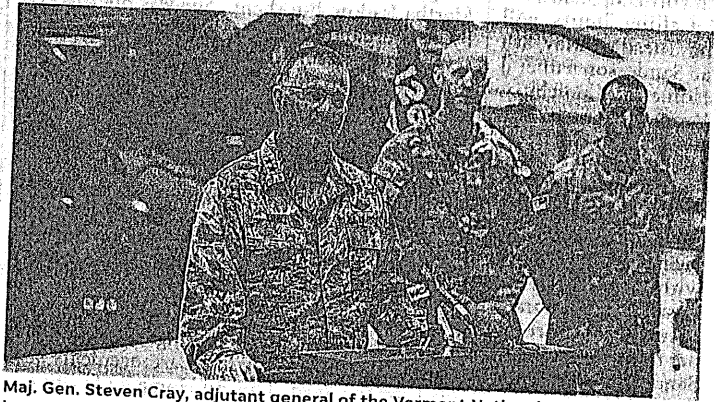
Shield operate throughout Southwest Asia and the Middle East, said Vermont Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, but the military does not specify basing locations.

The medical company's commander, Maj. Jamie Lewandowski, said the Vermont Guard has conducted medical evacuations in the past in Bosnia, Iraq and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Most of the 60 soldiers are leaving civilian jobs, Lewandowski said, thanking employers for their willingness to work with the Guard.

It will be a first deployment for about half of the unit, Lewandowski said. The major has been deployed to a combat zone previously, during the Guard's 2010 tour in Iraq.

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Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, adjutant general of the Vermont National Guard, announces in South Burlington on Friday that Charlie Company, an Army Aviation air ambulance unit, will deploy to Southwest Asia in June.

Vermont Reports \$55 Million Tax Surplus

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By XANDER LANDEN

VtDigger

The state is reporting a surplus of more than \$55 million in tax revenue this year. The increase in tax receipts is driven by boosts in state income and corporate tax dollars, according to the Joint Fiscal Office.

While much of the surplus will likely be harnessed in the fiscal year 2019 budget, the increase in revenue isn't expected to last.

JFO believes the revenue growth in fiscal year 2018 has been spurred by the sale of businesses, anticipated federal tax reforms and a 2017 stock market rally.

Personal income tax revenue is up by more than \$30 million.

Stephen Klein, JFO's chief fiscal officer, told the House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday that \$20 million of the expanded personal income revenue likely came from "wealthy one-off events," like the sales of businesses.

"It's sort of unusual, big transactions," Klein said in an interview. "If somebody is going to change their income for multiple years, you'll start seeing higher estimated payments."

The remaining \$10 million in the personal income revenue came, in part, from a boost in capital gains. Many tax filers may not have been inclined to take gains in 2016, in anticipation of tax reform in 2017.

"In 2017, there was tax reform,

and not only was there tax reform, there was an incredible year in the stock market," Klein told the committee. "Between those two you have a lot of capital gains coming into that line."

Tax shifting as a result of federal tax reform also could have contributed to this \$10 million boost.

Corporate tax income is up by more than \$18 million. Between \$8 million and \$9 million represents potential corporate refunds that have yet to be processed.

The other portion likely comes from businesses that are repatriating funds from abroad, that is bringing money held overseas back to the United States and paying a tax on that transfer. The federal tax law, passed in December, offers a

lower tax rate for companies that move money back.

JFO estimates that between \$10 million and \$11 million in the increased corporate tax revenue is from repatriation.

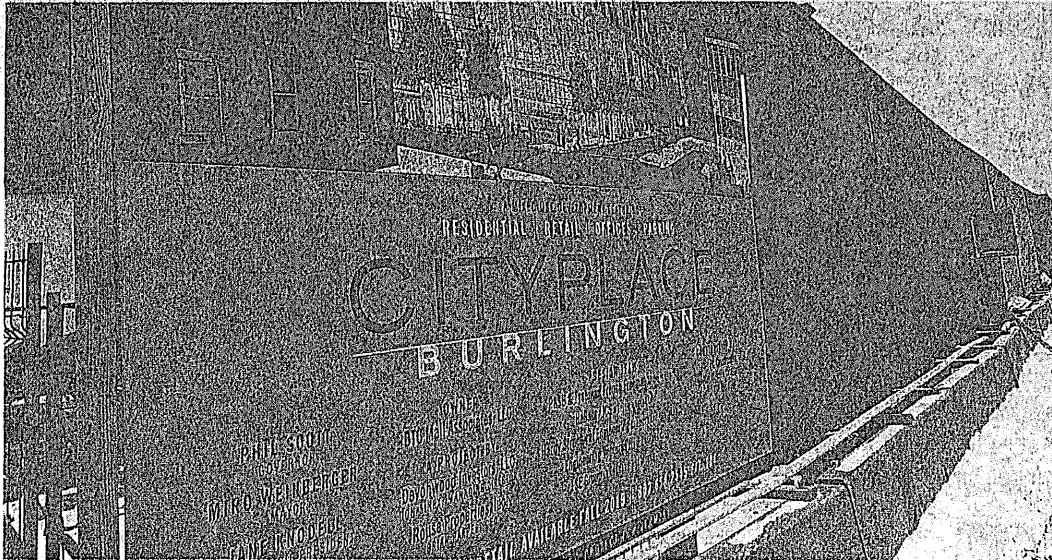
"Any corporation that is multi-state that does repatriate money and has a Vermont presence is likely to have a Vermont liability," Klein said.

Both the Senate and the Governor's Office have laid claim to the surplus. Klein said the Senate's budget bill includes \$24 million of spending that is contingent on the increase in tax revenue.

On Tuesday, Gov. Phil Scott unveiled a plan to plug a \$58 million hole in the education fund using \$20 million from the surplus.

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Demolition of parking garage next then arrival of steel beams



A sign along Bank Street seen on Jan. 3 marks the future home of Cityplace Burlington. AKI SOGA/FREE PRESS

Dan D'Ambrosio
Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Demolition crews are racing to make up for a two-month delay, caused by the unexpected discovery of asbestos, in the CityPlace Burlington project downtown. As of early May, excavator operators were focused on bringing down the hulking parking garage that served the former Burlington Town Center mall.

Like malls across the country, the Burlington Town Center mall fell victim to the changing habits of shoppers, particularly the great migration to online shopping. The mall was becoming a ghost town, a process that was only accelerated by the new owner, Don Sinex of Devonwood Investors LLC in New York.

As store after store closed, Sinex did not try to replace them, since he wanted to demolish the structure to make room for a new mixed-use development with office space and apartments in addition to retail — CityPlace Burlington.

See CITYPLACE, Page 4A

CityPlace

Continued from Page 4A

What will be built?

CityPlace Burlington will not be a mall, but rather a street-facing development. It will have retail, office, and residential space, featuring 14-story towers that required a change to zoning regulations in downtown Burlington.

The major elements of the original plan include: 272 apartments, with 20 percent affordable housing; 230,000 square feet of office space; 95,000 square feet of "first class" retail space; 28,000 square feet for retail or child care space; 3,000 square feet of community space, 909 parking spaces; the re-establishment of St. Paul and Cherry streets as through streets; and a rooftop observation deck to be made available to the public.

Sinex recently tweaked the plan to add 16 more apartments for a total of 288, with 20 percent still being affordable housing. He said he's changing the nature of the site, which will host 1,000 office tenants five days a week for up to 10 hours a day, and 600 to 700 people living there full-time.

What's the project timeline?

Sinex expects the development to open in stages, with everything fully up

and running by January 2021. He expects the retail and new parking garage to open first, in January or February of 2020, followed by the office space in July 2020. The residential space would begin to open in August and September, and would be completed by the end of the year.

The University of Vermont Medical Center will occupy as much as 117,000 square feet of the office space, slightly more than half of the space available. Sinex said two tenants — a preschool and a "large regional company" — will take up to 60 percent of the available retail space.

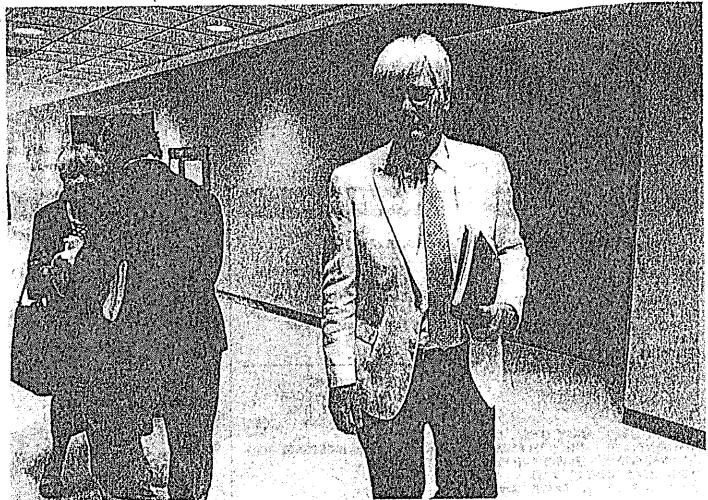
Sinex downplayed the possibility of Apple opening up a store in the new development, saying the tech juggernaut is developing 50 new retail stores in China and that Burlington "is not high on their list."

Sinex has not said when he will name the new retail tenants.

What efforts have sought to stop the project?

Sinex spent two and a half years navigating the permitting process in Burlington to get approval for CityPlace Burlington, then was sued last year by a group of citizens represented by Attorney John Franco, mostly objecting to the 14-story height of portions of the project.

A Vermont Environmental Court judge approved a settlement between Sinex and opponents of the project in July 2017. But in March of this year, the same



Burlington attorney John Franco, seen June 19, 2017. JOEL BANNER BAIRD/FREE PRESS

opponents filed a lawsuit in federal court, accusing the city of Burlington and Sinex's Devonwood Investors of violating their rights by not telling them about changes made to the previous settlement.

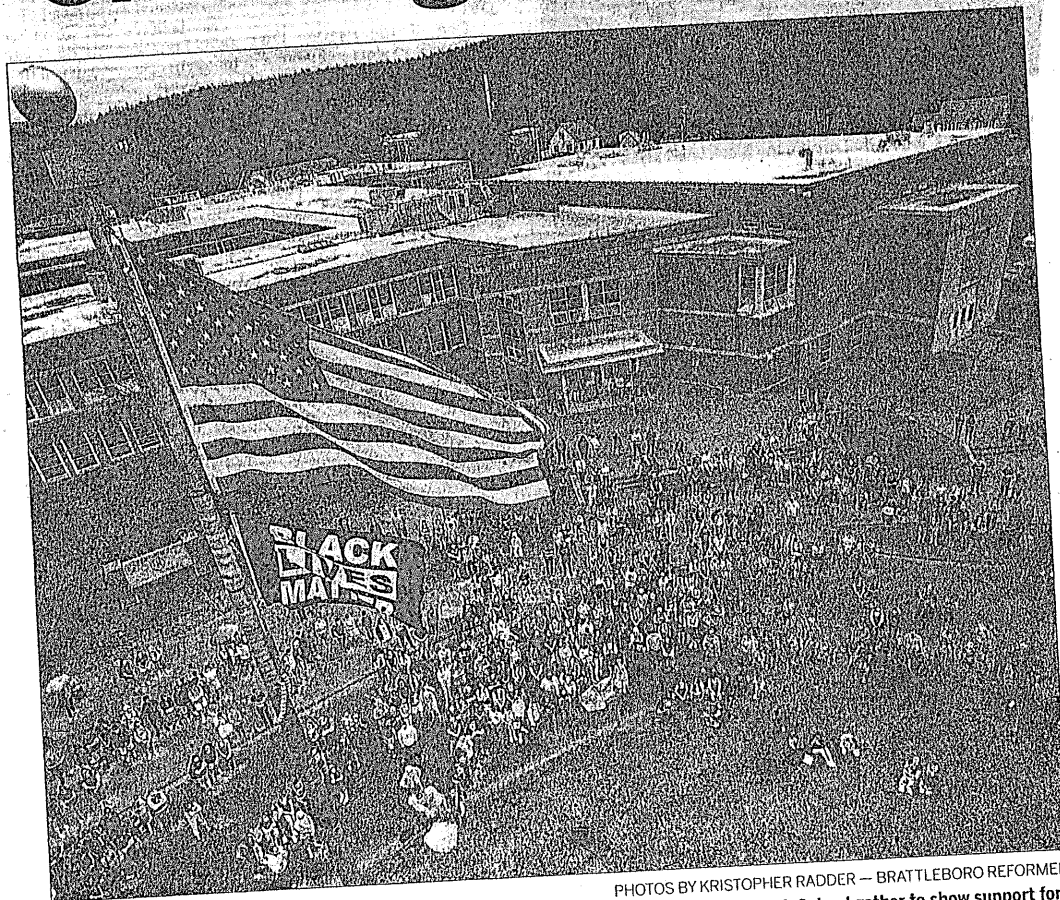
Burlington's zoning administrator approved the changes sought by Sinex in February, which eliminated retail space below street level and reduced the number of parking spaces in the basement.

The total number of parking spaces remains above the amount required by the city, according to Sinex.

Sinex maintains he had no obligation to get approval for the changes from the group of private citizens he settled with previously. He said he plans to respond to the lawsuit with a motion to dismiss.

Contact Dan D'Ambrosio at 660-1841 or ddambrosio@freepressmedia.com. Follow him on Twitter @DanDambrosioVT.

Showing solidarity



PHOTOS BY KRISTOPHER RADDER — BRATTLEBORO REFORMER

As part of Diversity Day on Friday, nearly 300 high school students from Brattleboro Union High School gather to show support for the Black Lives Matter flag being raised in front of the school.

Black Lives Matter flag run up BAMS flagpole

By BOB AUDETTE
Brattleboro Reformer

BRATTLEBORO — On Friday morning, the entire student bodies of Brattleboro Area Middle School and Brattleboro Union High School turned out to watch as Black Lives Matter flags were run up the schools' flagpoles.

"I go to school for an education," said BAMS student Mya Satchell, during the raising of the flag at BAMS. "I don't go to school to be teased for the color of my skin. I don't go to school to be stared at during a lesson about slavery or im-

INSIDE: See more images from the flag-raising event.
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migration. I don't go to school to be told to go back to Mexico. Don't assume where I am from. Don't tell me to go back to somewhere I've never been. I was born in and raised in Vermont. I don't belong anywhere else. I belong here."

FLAG, Page 2



Diamond Bedward, Kia Adams and Mya Satchell, eighth-grade students at Brattleboro Area Middle School, smile as they raise the Black Lives Matter flag up the school's flagpole.

Flag

FROM PAGE 1

Satchell and fellow BAMS students Kia Adams and Diamond Bedward first asked the BUHS #6 School Board on April 2 for permission to run up the Black Lives Matter flag at their school. On April 26, the School Board voted unanimously to allow the raising of the flag at the schools.

The raising of the flag was part of Windham Southeast Supervisory Union's Diversity Day curriculum, said BAMS Principal Keith Lyman, during the ceremony.

The theme of Diversity Day, said Lyman, is solidarity.

"For the last two weeks, the students have been working on presenting on the concept of solidarity, of people working together toward a common goal."

Lyman said during the winter, students participating in the BAMS Aware Group, which was started in 1998 at Brattleboro Union High School to support students of color in the community, began talking about the raising of the flag at high schools in Burlington and Montpelier.

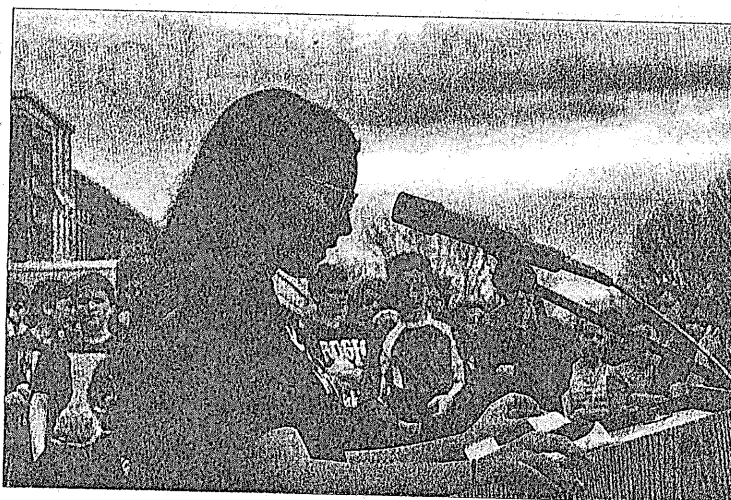
"These inspiring stories have been part of the conversation our students have been having," said Lyman.

As a result, Satchell, Adams and Diamond brought their "powerful proposal" to him and then the School Board. Lyman said he had discussions with the three students about their place in the community, while warning them they probably would experience negative feedback after presenting their proposal.

"What stuck with me ... was when they said the nasty comments they will receive are things that are already happening to them on a regular basis," said Lyman. "They are already used to this happening. It was one additional way for me to have some empathy for what it's like to be of color in an area of the country that is predominately Caucasian."

The three students also told Lyman that they wanted the flag to be for more than just the students of color, but also students who have been marginalized because of their appearances, beliefs or other factors. "I decided I wanted to support them in this request. My primary responsibility is to make students feel welcome and safe in this community. This flag will help them feel welcome and supported. Our goals at BAMS are learning for life, caring for others and doing the right thing together."

Satchell asserted that the Black Live Matter flag is not meant to be a divisive symbol, "but a symbol of equality and unity. It represents all people of color. ... For the



PHOTOS BY KRISTOPHER RADDER — BRATTLEBORO REFORMER

As part of Diversity Day on Friday, Mya Satchell, an eighth-grade student at Brattleboro Area Middle School, addresses her fellow students about what raising the Black Lives Matter flag means to her when it comes to inclusion into the community.

people wondering what the flag will do, it will support us through all racist incidents in our school. I know my school supports me and stands up with me. I want this flag to act like an educational tool for people who don't understand what we go through every day."

"I hope that one day we act like all lives matter," said Satchell. "I hope that one day we don't have to put up a flag to feel a part of something. I hope one day all lives truly do matter and are treated equally. I hope raising the flag brings us one step closer."

Adams reminded her fellow students that the flag is meant to help people to come together as a community. "Everyone is welcome. Black Lives Matter isn't meant to imply that black lives matter more than any other lives. We are all equal. We should all have the same rights and should all be treated equally because we are all important."

"Many people would like to turn a blind eye and pretend that this isn't happening, but it is," said Adams. "If knowing that other students have to go through the same racist, sometimes subtle, comments and knowing that the only option that they have is to stay quiet since it's just a joke or they didn't really mean it ... if it doesn't make you question our school system, there are problems."

During the flag raising, Shoulder Narrows, BUHS' a cappella group, sang Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

About two hours later, the ceremony was repeated at the flagpole in front of BUHS, with about 300 students in attendance during the voluntary assembly.

"I can't say enough for what our students have done to advocate for themselves with our School Board, the administration

of both schools and I am very proud of what they've done," said BUHS Principal Steve Perrin.

The ceremony itself was very short, preceded by a pair of poems and music.

Shadda Cliche read a quote that has become popular since the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

"How many moments of silence do we have to have until we aren't silent anymore?"

Z Muhammad read a poem that said, in part, "I'm a black kid, full of fear, shooting after shooting, the bullet that hits them, hits me where it hurts the most ... the heart ... I fear every day I go outside I won't come back in. The silver shining bars on the cell they want me in are calling my name ... Why does my skin make such a barrier for the life I'm living?"

"The students from both schools are to be commended for their commitment to making this request and their ability to effectively advocate for themselves and for all of us," said Perrin during the school announcement.

He reminded the student body that the phrase "Black Lives Matter" is not intended to be divisive, nor does it promote any one group ahead of others. The phrase was coined on July 13, 2013, by Alicia Garza who posted on Facebook "Black people. I love you, I love us. Our lives Matter." This was shared by Patrisse Cullors with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The post was made in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who had shot Trayvon Martin in February 2012.

"Black Lives Matter is now an international movement that campaigns against violence and systemic racism towards black people," said Perrin. "The movement also supports

advocacy for women, transgender people, communities in poverty and other groups that are disenfranchised or marginalized. These are the same values that the BUHS community has long supported as well."

Perrin also addressed the common retort to Black Lives Matter — All Lives Matter.

"Yes, everyone matters here at BUHS and we all deserve to come to school in a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment. That said, there exists a long history of systemic racism towards black people in our country. That racism, whether it is intentional or not, continues in our school and in our larger community. I would ask that instead of being defensive about this issue, that we acknowledge the work we have ahead of us as a community and focus on educating ourselves rather than being critical of others."

Perrin said the school board is developing procedures to address similar requests in the future.

"I would invite students who are interested in that to follow the example set by our BAMS and BUHS students to advocate with myself and the school board for such displays. Our student advocates are asking for the same inclusion and acceptance that many of us take for granted every day. This request is intended to improve our school community and create opportunities for meaningful discussion and reflection," said Perrin. "It is my expectation that our school and community support all students and staff. This flag is a clear symbol that we acknowledge and commit our school to fighting racism in ourselves and in our community."

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Vermont can shift reading trend upwards

Blanche Podhajski

Special to Burlington Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

The recent release of the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) once again stirs the pot about what Vermont students can and cannot do. ("Woolf: Vermont's student test results aren't worth the money," April 19).

Comparing favorably nationally is not a sufficient distinction when only 45 percent of our students are proficient in reading. And, when we continue to see declines that began in 2015 and continued in 2017, it is disappointing to say the least.

The Fordham Foundation described the NAEP 2017 scores as "America's 'Lost Decade' of educational progress." As if cost considerations were not enough, what about self-efficacy for our students? It is hard to celebrate increases in high school graduation rates when 38 percent of students entering community

colleges lack the basic skills to function in college coursework.

As 21st century as we have become in our technology and personalized learning quests, it remains important to know how to read. What staggers the mind is that we have never been in a better position to capitalize on almost 50 years of research that shows us what effective reading instruction looks like.

So why aren't we doing it?

A Stanford University study conducted in 2015 unequivocally demonstrated that specific teaching strategies have a direct impact on brain behavior. Teachers hold the key to those effective instruction strategies. And yet, the recently released District Management Group Report commissioned by the Vermont Legislature documented that teachers feel "ill-equipped" to help increase reading proficiency.

What a disservice to the professionals who dedicate their lives to our children. All teachers need to know what fMRI

studies have told us about why brain science matters. Thanks to that science and technology, when we look at children learning to read, we can identify which 60 percent are going to learn to read no matter how they are taught and which 40 percent need explicit structured literacy to show them how our English language works.

It is a question of equity and not the usual one based simply on income level. Rather, we need to assure that no matter what classroom a child enters with whoever teaches reading that his chance of learning to read is the same. Providing teachers with proven knowledge and practices is akin to what we all expect of our doctors. I think how irate I would be if brain science discovered interventions that would prevent my acquiring a debilitating disease and my physician were not trained to treat me.

Teachers want to reverse the decline that has begun to characterize reading performance. The time has come for all

students and teachers to succeed. Collaborations toward that end among school leaders, higher education, the Agency of Education, state government and reading research centers are investments that pay off in student outcomes.

Long-term systemic change can improve outcomes over time. Typically, schools have been sold the "quick fix," with expectations for long-term change which never happens. Changing the change paradigm through scientifically proven practice can result in schools that are transformed and students who succeed as equity of opportunity to learn becomes the norm rather than the exception.

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